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RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

Written statement submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1 January 2000]

GE.00-10632 (E)

1. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance will be a great step forward and will provide the opportunity for adopting a programme of action in combating racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia and related intolerance. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence emphasizes the role of non-governmental organizations during the preparatory stage of this world conference and invites the relevant NGOs to play an active role in its meetings. We also hope that the United Nations will not underestimate this role. Once, the NGOs played an active part in the work of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human Rights which was held in Vienna in 1993 and this was a positive experience for the United Nations. It is hoped that once more the non-governmental organizations can be provided with the opportunity to participate actively at this global event.

2. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence is concerned at the situation of the migrant workers and their families living in Europe. Despite the endeavours of the Western European countries for the protection and promotion of human rights, there is an atmosphere in Europe in which racism and racial discrimination continue to show themselves, sometimes in very discreet ways, through the treatment of public servants or in the eyes of the States. Migrant workers and their families constitute one of the groups most vulnerable to racism and the situation will remain so until they are given effective and special international protection. Migrant workers and their families should live in a peaceful and secure environment. Also, another reason for concern is the rise of racist and xenophobic movements in the political field: in Europe, some political parties are using such ideas, particularly targeted at migrant workers. If uncontrolled and unchecked, this emerging trend might become "strong enough to provide a solid base for making racism a legitimate official doctrine, even in the post-apartheid era" (E/CN.4/1999/15, para. 66). In the report of Mr Glélé-Ahanhanzo, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (E/CN.4/1999/15), in section II.A, entitled: "Activities of the far right and neo-Nazi movements", the Special Rapporteur refers to these parties in Europe and names some of them in different European countries. The report of the European Commission in 1997 refers to this painful fact: that racist feelings may be found among most European citizens. We hope that the World Conference will address this great concern in Europe, and that certain strong international mechanisms for monitoring this situation will be created to protect the rights of minorities against the racist and xenophobic movements in Europe.

3. Another concern of the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence is police violence in the United States of America based on racial discrimination. Human Rights Watch, in its report of 1999, writes: "Race and ethnicity continued to play a central role in police brutality in the United States. In places where data were available, members of minority groups had alleged human rights violations by police more frequently than non-minority

residents and far out of proportion to their representation in those places. Police have subjected minorities to apparently discriminatory treatment and in some cases have physically abused people of colour while using racial epithets." This is of great concern and such discriminatory treatment by police in the United States should be addressed and encountered by the United States Government.

4. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence believes that racism, xenophobia and racial discrimination are increasing in the world, and these trends are taking new forms. We believe that education can play a vital role in decreasing such trends. Also, States should be urged to take legislative action to prevent racial discrimination.